

THE CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE.

BY MEMBERS OF MENDON ASSOCIATION.

VOL. II.

NOVEMBER, 1925.

No. 11.

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CONDITIONS.

1. The CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE shall contain 32 octavo pages, be executed as respects the type and paper in the style of the Christian Spectator, and be sent to subscribers at \$1.50 a volume, payable in advance; or \$2 paid at the end of six months.

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PROVIDENCE, R. I.

PRINTED FOR THE PROPRIETORS BY BARNES, PEARL & CO.

1925.

THE
CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE.

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NOVEMBER, 1825.

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SERMON.

JOB 36, 22.—*Who teacheth like him?*

Job's afflictions were truly providential. He had long enjoyed great prosperity, and had no previous warning of approaching adversity. His troubles came suddenly and unexpectedly and rapidly, like the waves of the sea, billow after billow, until he was completely overwhelmed. He viewed them as flowing directly from the hand of God, and upon this ground, he implored the sympathy and compassion of his friends. "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." His friends saw and pitied him. Though they mistook his character, yet they did not mistake his condition and duty. They said many things to him, which were very suitable to his trying situation. But Elihu, who spoke last, said most, and what was most to the purpose. He undertook to speak on God's behalf; and what he said respect-

ing the character and conduct of God, was both pertinent and instructive. He represented God as supremely great and good, and as designing to teach mankind very important lessons of instruction, by the dispensation of providence. He considered Job as in God's school; and admonished him to hear the rod, and him who had appointed it. "Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him." This question carries in it a strong affirmation, that God is the best of instructors; and its full meaning may be comprized in this general observation:

God himself teaches men better than they can teach one another. To illustrate this truth, I shall,

I. Consider what is to be understood by God's teaching men himself; and,

II. Make it appear, that he can teach them better than they can teach one another.

I. Let us consider what is to be understood by God's teaching men himself.

“Who teacheth like him?” This mode of expression plainly implies, that God is a distinct and independent teacher. He can teach of himself, without human aid or instrumentality. It is true, he hath appointed human teachers, and commonly makes use of them, to convey instruction to their fellow creatures. He requires the aged to teach the young; the knowing to teach the ignorant, and the ministers of the gospel to teach their people. But he is able to supersede all these human teachers, and take the work of instruction into his own hands, and sometimes he sees it to be proper and necessary to do it. He never does it, however, only when there is something which requires his special interposition and exertion. He employs human instructions in all cases in which they will answer his purposes. But when these fail, he goes above them, and instructs mankind himself independently of all other teachers; and on this account, he claims to be the supreme Teacher. “Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God, which *teacheth thee to profit.*” And of the same people he says again, “Though I taught them rising up early, and *teaching* them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.” Thus God taught his people of old, and thus he continues to teach mankind himself. I now proceed,

II. To make it appear, that he can teach men better than they can teach one another.

“Who teacheth like him?” Elihu viewed God as the best of teachers. And this will appear to be true, if we consider the following observations.

I. God can teach the most *universally*. He can teach all sorts of men, without exception. He is greater than the greatest, higher than the highest, and wiser than the wisest of his intelligent creatures. There are many men, whose abilities, whose stations, whose interests, and whose hearts place them above all human instruction. But God is infinitely above all such persons, and as able to teach them as any of the lower ranks in life. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and able to teach the greatest potentates on earth. This Elihu takes notice of in the context. “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous; but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them forever, and they are exalted. And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in the cords of affliction; then he *sheweth them their work*; and their transgressions, that they have exceeded. *He openeth also their ear to discipline.*” God often taught the kings of Israel. When David ordered the people to be numbered, and Joab could not persuade him to give up his ambitious purpose, God effectually taught him

humility and submission. When Hezekiah's heart was lifted up, God laid him upon a bed of pining sickness, and taught him his frailty and mortality. God undertook to instruct Nebuchadnezzar the haughty king of Babylon, and humbled him to the dust. And he made Belshazzar, who had defied him to tremble before him. God can teach kings and emperors as easily as the lowest and meanest of their subjects. He can teach those who think they know too much to be instructed by their fellow mortals. He taught Solomon the wisest of men the folly, and vanity, and evil of his supreme love to the world. He taught Paul who was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and who had despised the instructions of Stephen, the knowledge of his own heart. He taught Manasseh humility and self-abasement, after he had rejected the instructions of his father, and of the priests and prophets in Jerusalem. And he taught his own people in Babylon what none of his priests and prophets were able to teach them before. Thus God is able to teach all descriptions of men, whether high or low, whether learned or unlearned, whether vain, profligate, or obstinate. In this respect there is none can teach like him.

2. God can teach men the most easily. He has them all in his hands, and a perfect access to their minds. He can always place them in a proper situation to be

taught. He can bring them into any situation he pleases, and turn their attention to whatever objects he sees best to instruct them. How easily did he strip Job of his wealth, of his friends, of all the objects of his affection, and fix his whole attention upon himself, which prepared him in the best manner to receive instruction? How easily did he carry the sons of Jacob into Egypt, and there teach them humility and penitence for their inhumanity and cruelty towards their brother Joseph? And how easily can he shift the situation and condition of any person in the world, and teach him the lesson he needs to learn? Whatever is necessary to be done in order to teach men, God can easily do. If it be necessary to make them rich, he can easily do it. If it be necessary to make them poor, he can easily do it. If it be necessary to put them into different stations, he can easily do it. Or if it be necessary to put them into any new, untried circumstances, he can easily do it. And when they are placed in a proper state to receive instruction, he can, with perfect ease, give them that kind and degree of instruction he pleases. Men often find great difficulty in teaching one another. They sometimes exhaust both their bodily and mental strength in labouring to teach one another, and without much or any effect. But God can teach thousands and mil-

lions at once, with the utmost ease. Neither dulness, nor obstinacy can be the least impediment to his instructions. Those who have resisted all other teachers, and rejected all other instruction, become quite teachable under his wise and powerful teaching. He can open the eye, the ear, and all the powers of the mind, to receive instruction. He can take the scales from the eyes, and the veil from the heart, and pour light and conviction through all the avenues of the mind.

3. God can teach men the most seasonably. They know not the best seasons to teach one another. Their instructions are often entirely lost by being mistimed.—But God always knows how to time instructions. He never instructs too soon, nor too late, but always teaches when there is the most proper occasion for it. He knows every person, and all his outward circumstances, and internal state of mind. Of course, he knows the exact time, when any of mankind need his special instruction. He sees proper to teach some when they are young, and some when they are old.—He sees proper to teach some whilst they are rising, and some after they have risen to distinction in the world. He sees proper to teach some in the height of their prosperity, and others in the height of their obstinacy and wickedness. God often judges very differently from men, in respect to

the proper seasons of instructing: He often chooses those seasons which men consider as the most improper. But he always judges right in regard to the most proper seasons of instructing every particular person. He took the most proper season to teach Jacob.—He was in the midst of prosperity, and the greatest of all the men of the east. This prepared him to feel the weight and hear the voice of the rod of instruction. When Isaac was in the flower of his age, and engrossed his father's affections; then was a proper time for God to try and teach Abraham submission. When Moses was come to years, and began to raise his views and hopes to the throne of Egypt; then was a proper time for God to blast his expectations, take him from the court of Pharaoh, and teach him humility in a solitary wilderness. When Charles V. had reached the summit of his wishes and triumphed over Europe; then was a proper time, for God to seize his mind, shut him up in a monastery, and teach him in silence the folly and madness of his life. When the Earl of Rochester had prostituted his noble talents to the vilest purposes; then was a proper time for God himself to teach him what no human instructions could teach him. In all other instances of this kind, God always chooses the most proper seasons to teach those, who need his special instruction. He constantly keeps his eye upon

every one of the children of men, and observes their characters, stations, and particular circumstances; and if needs be, he takes this, that, and the other person into his own school; to teach him in his own way. Sometimes he sees it proper to teach a whole nation at once; sometimes to teach a whole city; sometimes to teach a whole family; and sometimes to teach a single individual.

4. God teaches the most effectually. Other teachers may labour in vain and spend their strength for nought. Paul may plant and Apollos water, without any success. The best human instructions may be lost upon those, to whom they are given. If persons are unwilling to be instructed, no human efforts can teach them. Any person may if he pleases, put himself out of the reach of instruction or shut his mind against it. Observation and experience unitedly teach us that many remain ignorant, who enjoy the means of light and conviction. But when God himself teaches, he teaches effectually. He has a supreme and absolute dominion over the minds of men. Every power and faculty of their souls are under his immediate influence. And even their hearts are in his hand, and he can turn them whithersoever he pleases. He can open the eyes of the blind, and make them see. He can open the ears of the deaf, and make them hear.— He can awaken the hopes and

fears of the stupid, and make them feel. He can do still more, he can soften the hearts of the hardened, and make them yield to his instructions. This has been visibly manifested in numerous instances. He made Pharaoh hear, attend, and yield so far as he pleased. He recalled his backsliding people to himself, from time to time, as soon as he undertook to teach them himself. He awakened, convinced, and humbled any individual among his people, at any time he saw best. When the body of his people had become as ignorant, as stupid, as unfeeling as the dry bones in the valley, he called them to life and sensibility, by his own sovereign and irresistible influence. In a few hours, he effectually and savingly taught the thief on the cross. He as instantly and savingly taught Saul of Tarsus while breathing out slaughter and death to the followers of Christ. He can irresistibly dart light and conviction into the consciences of the most bold and stout-hearted sinners, and throw them into the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity.† How often have scoffers attempted to resist divine teachings, and been confounded and conquered. God does not, indeed, always mean to teach sinners savingly; but he always teaches those effectually whom he means to teach effectually, and wounds those whom he means to destroy.

5. God teaches the most profitably. He gives more useful instructions to men, than they can give to one another. They can enlighten each other in respect to their temporal concerns, and in some measure in respect to their eternal interests. Job's friends said many good things to him; but he received very little light or conviction from their instructions. At length, God himself undertook to teach him, and his teaching carried light and conviction to his conscience and heart, and made the most useful impressions on his mind. This he freely acknowledged before God. "I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This leads me to observe in particular,

1. That God can give the most profitable instruction concerning himself. He can manifest himself to the minds of men, and give them such views of his greatness and glory, as they cannot give to one another. All that men can say about God, will leave them ignorant of his great and amiable character. But when he teaches them upon this subject, he brings himself near to them, and makes them realize his being, his presence, his all-seeing and heart-searching eye and his supreme power and right to save or destroy. He can make men feel that they are in his hand, as the clay is in the

hand of the potter, that he can wound and heal, and none can deliver out of his hand. He can teach more about himself in one day, than one man can teach another in years. Let God only bereave a man of his friend, or take away his health, or disappoint his hopes, and he will teach him more about his holy and righteous sovereignty, than he ever did or could learn without divine teaching. God can place men in such circumstances, that they cannot help realizing his supremacy and their own dependance, and the weight of his great, and glorious, and awful character. Men must know God before they can either love, or serve, or enjoy him. To know God and Jesus Christ is life eternal, and none can come to the Son, but those who have been taught and learned of the Father. The knowledge which God teaches men concerning himself is essential to their salvation.

2. God can give the most profitable instruction respecting the human heart. This is a very useful branch of knowledge, which none but God can give. While God lets men alone, and does not take them into his own school, they always remain ignorant of their hearts. No discourses on total depravity, that man can utter, will teach men their native depravity. Paul had received much human instruction while in the state of nature; but he says he

continued ignorant of the enmity of his heart, until God taught him what he was. "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death." God opened his eyes to see himself and his holy law, by which he was bound and condemned; and this discovered the total corruption of his heart, and destroyed all his false and groundless hopes of the divine favour. But God takes different ways to make men know the plague of their own hearts. Very often he does this, by some special dispensation of providence. How many live at ease and unconscious of the total depravity of their hearts, until they are sorely afflicted and bereaved. This method God took to teach Manasseh, that prodigy of wickedness. He taught him by the briars and thorns, that saving knowledge, which none of the priests or prophets could teach him. He humbled him in the dust under a realizing sense of the aggravated guilt of his malignant heart.

3. God can teach men the most useful knowledge respecting the vanity of the world. Neither age, nor common experience, nor human instruction will make men sensible of the vanity of all earthly pursuits and enjoyments. But God can make them see and feel their vanity. He taught Solomon

that knowledge of the world, which all the learning of Egypt could not teach him. He made him see and feel that the world and the things of the world were vanities of vanities, and a vexation of spirit. God can effectually teach men the vanity of the world, by only opening their eyes, and causing them to look into eternity. He has taught thousands and thousands, in this way, to renounce the world and the things of the world, and to choose himself for their supreme portion.

4. God can teach men the most useful knowledge respecting their own frailty and mortality. Neither observation, nor human instruction will make them realize how frail and mortal they are. Naturally their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations, and that they shall live forever, and not see corruption; but God can make them know their end, and the measure of their days, what it is, and how frail they are. David therefore prayed to God and said, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Though we see wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, we shall not realize that we are born to die, and are constantly walking on the side of the grave and verge of eternity, unless God effectually teaches us our frailty and mortality.

Finally, God can teach men the most profitable knowledge concerning the worth of the soul. The soul of every person is infinitely precious. It is capable of existing forever, and of enjoying eternal happiness, or suffering eternal misery. Nevertheless, all men naturally *despise* their own souls, and neglect their immortal interests for the sake of the trifles and vanities of this life. But God can make them realize the import of Christ's solemn question. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" When God undertakes to teach men himself effectually and savingly, he shows them the worth of their souls, and causes them to seek and secure the one thing needful. And this none can teach but God only.

IMPROVEMENT.

I. If God can teach men better than they can teach one another, then there is no ground to despair of the effectual instruction of any under the light of the gospel. It appears from long and universal observation and experience, that mankind are naturally unwilling to receive instruction respecting spiritual and divine subjects.— Under the Mosaic dispensation, God appointed priests and prophets to teach his people his character and their character, his commands and their duty. Under

the gospel dispensation, Christ has appointed his ministers to teach men the doctrines and duties of his religion, and to beseech them, in his name to become reconciled to God. But priests and prophets, and apostles, and their successors, have always been very unsuccessful in their religious instructions. Some have misunderstood them, and many more have hated and rejected them, and chosen to live and die in fatal ignorance. Paul has planted, and Apollos has watered, but generally with little or no success. Men have always been able to resist all human instructions, and they are still able to resist them. But there is no ground to despair of the effectual instruction of any under the gospel. God can take the work into his own hands, and irresistibly and effectually teach the most stupid, careless, and obstinate. There is no ground to despair of the instruction of any nation, who enjoy the means of grace. God often instructed and reformed his own people, after they had fallen into a national declension and stupidity, notwithstanding all the efforts of their religious teachers to enlighten and restrain them.

The prophets, time after time, viewed them as incurable and in dispondence gave them up as past recovery by any mere human instructions and exertions. But God repeatedly brought about a national reformation. Though he does

not instruct without means; yet he can use new means or employ old ones, to instruct whole nations what they had long neglected or refused to learn. He can employ means and make them effectual, to instruct, to reform, and to convert heathen as well as christian nations, and it appears from his promises, that he will fill the whole world with the knowledge of his glory, as soon as his power, in consistency with his goodness and wisdom, can bring about such a great and happy reformation and revolution among the nations of the earth. There is no city, nor town, nor village, nor family so ignorant or corrupt but he can effectually teach and reform them. He can instruct by afflictions and bereavements those who have neglected and refused to *read* his word, or to *hear* his gospel, or to *regard* private instructions and admonitions. He can cause the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the stupid to feel. He has access to the understandings consciences, and hearts of all sinners at all times and in all places, and can form one and another, and as many as he pleases vessels of mercy. In times of darkness and declension, the friends of God have no right to despond, as Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah did. God can effectually teach, when other teachers apparently labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought.

2. If God instructs in the manner we have heard, then we

must conclude, that mankind are naturally very unwilling to be instructed. If they were willing to receive the instruction they might easily and early receive it from the common and ordinary means of instructions, which God is using with them. He is continually teaching them his being and perfections, by his works. "The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy work; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." And the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God head. So that all in the *christian*, and even in the *heathen* world are without excuse, if they remain ignorant of their Creator, Preserver and Benefactor, and do not glorify him as God. God is continually teaching them in the common course of providence, their frailty and mortality, by frequently calling them around the sick, the dying, and the dead. And he is teaching them by his word, the depravity of their hearts, the worth of their souls, and the importance of securing their salvation, by repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If they were willing to be instructed, these and other outward and ordinary means of instruction would be sufficient to lead them to the knowledge and practice of their duty, without

God's using other more powerful means of instruction. The truth is, mankind are born like the wild ass's colt, and choose to live in ignorance and stupidity. They say to God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They naturally hate parental instruction in their childhood and youth, and public instruction, in every succeeding period of life. The heathen world all live without the knowledge of the only living and true God, and much the largest portion of the christian world, live without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world, though they have line upon line, and precept upon precept. How very few learn their character, condition, and duty from the common and constant means of instruction.—God is obliged to employ other and more energetic means to awaken those whom he intends to awaken, to convince those whom he intends to convince, and to convert those whom he intends to convert. No one ever knows his utter aversion to religious instruction, until God undertakes to instruct him himself. This Ephraim acknowledged. God says, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastized me, and I was chastized, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." The awakened and convinced sinner is astonished at his former stupidity and opposition to divine instruction.

3. If God instructs men in the manner that has been said; then they never can have any excuse for not harkening to his instructions. They often think they have reasons, and sometimes good reasons, for not harkening to human instructions. Children are apt to imagine, that they have good excuses for not regarding the instructions of their parents and others. They may think, that parental instructions are unnecessary, unwise, and unimportant, and therefore unworthy their attention and regard; or they may think, that they are given at an improper time and in an improper manner; and for such reasons imagine, that they are excusable in refusing to yield an obedient ear. But they can have no such excuses for disregarding divine instructions; for God never gives them any unnecessary, or unwise, or unimportant, or unseasonable instructions. A people may think, that their public teachers give them unprofitable, unscriptural, or erroneous instructions; and feel themselves justified in disregarding them. But they never can find any excuse or palliation for disregarding the instructions which God gives them, by his word, or providence. He knows when to instruct them, how to instruct them, and what instructions to give them. He never teaches only when human instructions fail of producing their desired effect. He knows when men disregard or

misimprove human instruction, and need his own instruction, and in such cases, he takes them into his own hand, and gives them that kind of instruction, which their case requires. If they need to be instructed by losses, or by sickness, or by bereavements, he employs such means to instruct them, though he knows they will be grievous and hard to be borne. He never sends too few nor too many, too light or too heavy afflictions. The instructed, therefore, never have any reason to disregard the time, or manner, or duration of the painful instructions he gives them. As soon as they learn what they need to learn by the things which they suffer, he will remove their burdens, and give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

4. If God teaches in such a manner as we have heard; then those who disregard or abuse his instructions are extremely criminal. They reject the best instructions and manifest the most obstinate and unteachable spirit, which is highly displeasing to God. He requires them to be still and humble themselves under his mighty hand; but their hearts rise in direct enmity and opposition to him, while he is using the most proper and powerful means to teach them humiliation and self-abasement.—For such a spirit he severely re-proves them. He upbraids them

in this pointed language, “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.” He said to Ezekiel whom he sent to instruct his people, “My people will not hear *you*, for they will not hear *me*.” God tells them as one man, “Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.” And again, he says, “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would of none of my reproof. I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.” There is another threatening still more expressive of God’s displeasure towards every despiser and abuser of divine warnings, admonitions, and instructions. “He that being often *reproved*, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” Hence,

5. Those who are under the bereaving, chastising, and instructive hand of God, are in a very critical, trying, and dangerous situation. God does not afflict them willingly nor undesignedly. He does not take them under his own immediate instruction for nothing. He intends to answer some wise and holy purpose by all the trials, afflictions, and bereavements, with which he visits them. He always means to make them better or worse, by all the dispensations of

his providence towards them, and he never fails of answering his original designs. He afflicted and bereaved Job for his good. He brought him to a cordial and unreserved submission to his bereaving and correcting hand, and eventually caused light to arise out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, and good out of all the evils he suffered. He tried, afflicted, scourged, and taught Manasseh, by the briars and thorns, till he humbled himself greatly, returned to him cordially, and became his dutiful and obedient servant. But God designed in chastising Pharaoh time after time, to prepare him for his final overthrow; and he designed in chastising the forward Israelites year after year, for forty years together, not to prepare them to enter Canaan, but to fall and perish in the wilderness. In all these instances, God answered his different purposes of making some better and some worse, some the vessels of mercy and some the vessels of wrath. And he always means to answer the one, or the other of these purposes in chastising and instructing both saints and sinners. He tells them plainly, that so long as they are in affliction, they are in a state of trial, and that their trials will do them good or hurt, accordingly as they improve or misimprove them. If they are wise, they will neither despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when they are rebuked of him. They will feel and express that patience and submission, which the prophet did, when he said, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned, until he plead my cause and execute judgment for me." But they have great ground to fear, that they shall misimprove and abuse divine corrections and instructions, and come forth from the furnace of affliction, not like gold purified and refined; but like what men call reprobate silver, because the Lord has rejected them. Those who are externally afflicted have reason to tremble for fear, lest they shall refuse to learn obedience by the things they suffer, and to humble themselves under the right hand of God, which can save or destroy. Trials and afflictions are the most powerful means God ever employs to soften or harden the hearts of men. When they sensibly feel, that he is using these powerful means with them, they have reason to realize their critical and dangerous condition. They may now be hearing the loudest and most solemn calls to submission, repentance, reformation, and obedience, that they ever will hear before they meet the king of terrors and lie down in everlasting sorrow. The afflicted are to be pitied, not only on account of their *suffering*, but more especially on account of their *dangerous* situation. They are in extreme danger of turning off their attention from God, and eternity, and

the salvation of their souls, and fixing their eyes, and hearts, and hopes upon the foolish, hurtful, and ensnaring object of this world, which drown men in remediless perdition.

6. It appears from what has been said, that those whom God internally as well as externally teaches by the afflictive dispensations of providence, have great reason to be thankful, for his spiritual instructions. Sanctified afflictions are among the richest of divine favours. David gratefully acknowledged, that it had been good for him that he had been afflicted. The primitive christians often expressed their gratitude for the afflictions they were called to suffer. The apostle says to the Romans, "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience, & experience hope." He says to the Corinthians, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Such a source of hope and happiness in this life, are afflictions to those who wisely improve them; and this source of happiness never fails but continues through the endless ages of eternity. Saint John says in his vis-

ion of heaven, "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen; Blessing, and glory and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears

from *their eyes*." What a rich and lasting source of happiness are sanctified afflictions to those who wisely improve them to the glory of God and to their own good! Well might the primitive christians glory in tribulations, while they saw with the eye of faith, the future and everlasting good which should flow from them. Good men never enjoy a better opportunity to promote their temporal, spiritual, and eternal interests, than while God himself is teaching them in the furnace of affliction. You have heard of the faith of Abraham and of the patience of Job. Their extraordinary faith and patience were the happy fruits of their no less extraordinary trials and afflictions. Saints like the palm tree, are the most flourishing and fruitful under the lowest depressions. They are then the best capable and best disposed to receive the best instructions from the word and providence of God.

The whole tenor of this discourse now teaches all the afflicted, to pray for divine teaching "If any are afflicted, let them pray." This is a command of God which binds old and young, high and low, saints and sinners. If God has taken away a son or daughter from any, let them pray. If God has taken away a father or mother from any, let them pray. If God has taken away a brother or sister from any, Let them pray. Can any expect to

receive any benefit from their afflictions, if they neglect to pray, that God would teach them to profit? Can any parents expect, that the death of a son or daughter will be sanctified to them, if they neglect, secret and family prayer? Can children expect, that the death of a father or mother, brother or sister will be sanctified to them, if they neglect to pray that they may be taught of God? How many afflicted and prayerless families are in this place? and how many more afflicted and prayerless persons dwell among this people? All such persons and families are hardening their hearts and preparing themselves for heavier afflictions, or remediless destruction. It is time for all the afflicted, all the stupid, all the impenitent, and all the unbelieving, to rise and call upon God to prepare them for death and eternity.

For the Christian Magazine.

EXEGESIS OF ROMANS, 8, 19.—*For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

The sons of God, evidently mean christians—those, who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Through the spirit of adoption, they cry, Abba, Father. "The Spirit, itself beareth

witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God : and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." By the manifestation of the sons of God, is meant a lucid and full display of christian character and enjoyment. The lives of christians do make some manifestation of their relation to the great Jehovah ; and they have some measure of the sweets of this blessed relation. At the same time, it must be confessed, that, as they are sanctified, but in part—and have much remaining sin, they make but a slight, a very imperfect manifestation of christian character and enjoyment. And their number has, hitherto, been comparatively small.

It is an event exceedingly desirable, that Zion should be enlarged, and that the character of the sons of God should be more distinctly marked. This is the event expected and waited for, according to the text. In anticipation of it, the apostle was comforted and animated. Though he suffered—and Zion suffered—and the world was lying in wickedness ; yet, he looked forward and beheld a bright display of glory and blessedness. Hence he observed, "I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed in us." In this connection, he penned the passage under consideration. "For the earnest expectation of

the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The principal difficulty is, to ascertain that, which is exegetical of "*The creature*, in this, and the three following verses. I have met with nothing, in any commentary, which satisfies my mind on the subject. With deference to those, who have critically attended to the subject and given their opinion, I would suggest an explanation ; which appears to accord with the context and other scriptures. It is, that by *the creature*, is meant the new creature—one, who has been, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that is, a true christian. The following, are some of the reasons for this opinion.

1. The connection in which, *the creature* is introduced. The apostle had been speaking of christians. He had declared, that there is no condemnation to them—that, by their union to Christ, through the influence of the Spirit, they are made free from sin and death—that they are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—that they are debtors, through the spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body—that they are the sons of God—that they have the spirit of adoption—that they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, &c. In this connection, without any intimation of a change in the character the creature is mentioned. And not only, without any intimation of a change in

the character, but with a clear intimation, that the same character is continued. The apostle declares, in the verse, immediately preceding the passage, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed in us." Then add, "For the earnest expectation of the creature, &c. The very connection would lead us to expect a continuation of the same character, which had been the principal subject of the chapter, and especially, of the verse immediately preceding.— This is the christian character; which more than intimates that, the creature and christians are synonymous.

2. The moral character of the creature, exactly corresponds with that of the christian. The creature is represented, as earnestly expecting, and waiting, with intense desire, for the manifestation of the sons of God. That is, to see christians act in character and shine as lights in the world—to see converts multiplied, as the drops of morning dew. And do not christians desire and expect, labour and pray for the same blessing? Do they not expect, that the sons of God will be more distinctly and glorious manifested, in this world, than they have ever been; and that, in the world to come, they will be perfectly manifested?

The description, given of the creature in the twenty-first verse,

perfectly accords with the christian character. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly." Paul, with manifest application to christians, in general, said, "For that which I do I allow not; for what I would that do I not, but what I hate, that do I." The christian is subject to vanity, not willingly—that is, sin and its consequences are not agreeable to the spiritual, the renewed mind; but are the fruits of the flesh, or the remaining carnal disposition. Hence, subjects are applied to christians, and they are addressed, either as carnal; or, as spiritual; or, as partaking of both dispositions.— What is here said of the creature, as relates to moral character, does strictly apply to christians; but, it is believed will apply to no other being in the Universe.

The description of the creature in verse twenty-two is applicable to christians. "The whole creature, or every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Christians groan being burdened with their own sins. They agonize when they contemplate the sinful and wretched state of the world.— Pangs, on this account, like those of a travailing woman, run through the whole body of Christians. The twenty-third verse contains a striking confirmation of our opinion. "And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the

first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies." The beginning of this verse, manifestly, refers to those mentioned in the preceding, denominated *the whole creation*, or *every creature*. The only distinction between those, and these mentioned in the verse before us, is, that the latter have the *first fruits* of the Spirit. The first fruits are esteemed the best. Hence God, under the former dispensation, required, that the first fruits should be consecrated to him. The first fruits of the Spirit evidently mean a more gracious influence, or a larger measure of it, than was bestowed in ordinary cases. In this sense, Paul, and other apostles and teachers were favoured with the *first fruits* of the Spirit; while a smaller measure was granted to christians in general. It is certainly more than intimated in the comparison, which Paul makes between the *creatures* and *himself* and *others*! that while the latter had the *first fruits*—the former had the *fruits* of the Spirit. And this opinion is further confirmed, when we find the apostles and others, on whom the Spirit was profusely shed, bearing a sympathizing part with the *creatures* in bemoaning the sin, vanity and wretchedness, which prevailed. Thus, the moral feelings and character of the creature are,

precisely, the feelings and character of the christian.

3. The hope, or expectation of the creature, is the same, as the christian hope. Every creature is groaning and travailing in pain, on account of sin; but, at the same time, he earnestly expects and waits for deliverance. This is the case with christians. In view of this subject, Paul exclaims, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." In the context it is stated, "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that, we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." True believers have actually experienced a great change in their moral temper—and they have the earnest of everlasting holiness and joy; but, so scanty is their measure of holy love, and so frequent its interruptions, that they rather live on hope than actual fruition. And not only is the hope of the creature, with respect to himself, identified with that of the christian; but it is also the same, with respect to Zion at large and the world of mankind. There is the same earnest expectation and patient waiting for the accomplishment of all God's gracious promises.

4. No promise has been made, or can be made to the *christian*,

more encouraging and animating, than is made to the *creature*.

"Because, the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." What can the creature desire? what can he have more? Will he be freed from the thralldom of sin—the bondage of corruption—will he have the perfect, the glorious liberty of God's children? then he will be an heir of God—an heir with Christ—he will be glorified with that Saviour in whose cause he has suffered. Richer blessings are, surely, nowhere promised to the people of God, than those, which are here promised to the *creature*. And they are, in fact, precisely the same blessings.

Is the *creature* introduced in connexion with christians, as being of the same fraternity—is the moral character, ascribed to the *creature*, the christian character—is he earnestly hoping for the same glorious things, for which christians hope, and has he the same exceeding great and precious promises, which christians have? Then, christians, and none but christians can be exegetical of the term *creature*, in this passage.

OMICRON.

IRVING'S ORATIONS.

A plain Farmer was the other day met in a bar-room by a young

Squire, who addressed him as follows:

"Well, neighbour, as you are a man of considerable reading, I presume you have read *Irving's Oration*; and I want you to tell me why we have no such writers on these shores of the Atlantic?—Have you ever met with such a master work in the new world?

Farmer. True, I have given the *Oration* a reading, but have hardly been able to form an opinion of them. Nor can I give a satisfactory reason, perhaps, why we have not such writers among us. I have such an awkward faculty of putting ideas into language, or else have no ideas, that I should be a poor hand to criticise on such works.

Esquire. But do you not admire them? Has he not swept away all the technical language of theology, which so effectually hampers the pulpit orator, and placed the subject of theology before us in a most interesting dress; so that, however much complaint there has been about the opposition of sinners to preaching, no heart can now fail to admire and love what he proposes?

F. I acknowledge that he is somewhat a singular genius; such as I should think would raise admiration in most audiences. But you must not expect that we farmers can be easily touched with what you might denominate the flowers of rhetoric. I once took some pleasure in passing through a flow-

er garden ; but as I advance in years, I find, that in my pursuit for real fruit, or valuable vegetables, I tread flowers under my feet with indifference. Mr. Irving has swept away some technical terms from his theology, but has introduced others from law, physic, astronomy, botany, and the whole field of science, to me hardly intelligible, though I always thought I had a pretty good idea of *theological* language as used in the scriptures and the writings of our best divines. But this champion affects to despise it all, and suggests to us that the reason why christianity has been received by so few, is that it has unfortunately been preserved in a dress too stiff and systematical, to please the better feelings of mankind. He declaims unsparingly against the whole company of divines, reformers, and pulpit orators which the world has produced ; and gives us a hint that we may expect from his pen an entire reform. Now I have read his Orations, and his argument for the Judgment ; and you ask me, if I do not admire them. I cannot tell. I seemed to admire something every page I read ; but what it was I could scarcely conceive. Nor could I say which it was, admiration, astonishment, or contempt, or a compound, that I felt. I concluded finally that the "*vox, et preterea nihil*," was so wonderfully arranged, that my feelings had for their exciting cause, as our Doctor says, the

skill of the musician. No doubt, Mr. Irving has a zeal which is laudable ; and he cannot be accused of inactivity in the pursuit of his object. But, whatever may be his age, he must be a young man. He has the judgment of an ambitious youth, or I am much deceived ; and will substantially fail of his end, or I am no prophet.

E. A prophet I will never acknowledge you, nor a man of *taste* if you mean to insinuate that Irving is wanting in taste. Dear Sir, I think you must be mistaken in your views of the man. How did you acquire so strong prejudices against such a beautiful writer ? Was it from his *theology*, his peculiar sentiments, or where is the cause of such an unfriendly judgment ?

F. I acknowledge that my taste does not agree with Mr. Irving's and yours ; but I am not conscious of any prejudices which were not excited by a patient reading of the work. As to his theology, I have less objection to the kind than the degree of it.— I do not find much theology in the volume. After reading his Orations for the Oracles of God, I acknowledge that my feelings of their importance were increased. And the truth of a righteous judgment, I should have questioned, had my faith waited for the support which Mr. Irving proposed to afford. I do not say that he is not a good advocate,

but I cannot follow his argument.

E. I perceive then that he is too deep for you. I was aware that you did not comprehend him. I think his arguments for the Judgment are excellence and conclusive.

F. In what does the excellence of an argument consist?

E. Why, sir, I think it consists in such inverted sentences as to confound an adversary; such thrilling language as to fill his blood with the cold chills of fear; and such impetuosity as to be irresistible. I admire to see an orator in a moment at his conclusion, and by such a masterly manœuvring that no one can see how it is done; and then he is sure that an opponent cannot refute him.

F. I now perceive why Mr. Irving pleases you; it is because he chants you into an obsequious fondness for the man, and makes you forgetful of his subject, until he brings you to the conclusion; and then out of mere courtesy you are unwilling to wrest yourself from it.

E. Do you then think there is a deficiency in his manner of reasoning?

F. Indeed I do.

E. Then you are ready, I conclude, to point out this deficiency and let us have your idea of an excellent argument. Now I expect to learn something; proceed—

F. You must bear with a farmer, if I make use of some common objects to illustrate my ideas. There is so much bowing and scraping to his auditors when he is about to introduce an idea, that I can think of nothing else for some time. After he has introduced himself and prepared the object of his message, he seems for some time to forget his errand or object, and spends a great deal of time in entertaining them with his own skill in rhetorical flashes and thunderings. In other words, when he commences an argument his illustrations are so diverting to the mind, that, instead of serving as intermediate links, chaining the premises with the conclusion, they only serve to confuse the argument, and render the connexion between the premises and conclusion, a matter of uncertainty. You know too, that he has an air; an air so peculiar that we cannot keep it out of sight. I once heard it remarked, that "Whatever speaker gained the attention of his audience to *himself*, had some defect in manner." Irving has this defect, though I may never point it out. I think he would be a better reasoner and a better orator did he pay more respect to those things he affects to dread and despise: for instance, if he intends an argument in favor of the Judgment; let him first gain a strong conception of its essential parts in his own mind; then clothe his ideas in language *appro-*

priate ; even theological or technical, rather than sacrifice perspicuity and conclusiveness, to a fondness to please poetic ears.

Esq. But one would think from your remarks that he entirely fails of his object.

F. No. He does not fail of his object; for he never seems to have the right object for any length of time. He is too enthusiastic to please. With him, all is lost if he does not succeed in pleasing. He conveys the idea that christianity will please, when rightly addressed to the world. He is sanguine in this visionary sentiment. For this reason, his object almost always is to please. And he does not often fail perhaps of his object.

Esq. Very well, can a speaker expect to recommend religion by offending his auditors?

F. By no means. To offend is no better than to please. Neither is the proper object of the preacher; his object is to follow the directions of his Master. "Go teach all nations to observe whatsoever I have commanded you." Did any Apostle obey his Master in this commission, without carrying with him "the offence of the cross;" as offensive as "systematic forms of speech" are to Mr. Irving? Finally, was not our Lord a perfect example of his own blessed ministry? And did he ever please his hearers, except they had already become his disciples? The truth, is, true

religion never was pleasing to the unrenewed heart of man. You may dress it as you will, and when you present it for the reception of a sinner, if he discovers its reality or true features, he will reject it. If you present it clothed in such human vestments, that he does not perceive what is presented, he may receive it; but on the first discovery that it makes the demands of religion, he will reject it.

Esq. But, Sir, you do not suppose that all means of commending the gospel are equally eligible. Will not such addresses as some of Mr. Irving's effectually enter the understanding, awaken the conscience and subdue the heart?

F. They may reach the understanding and gain it, arouse the conscience and give it vigour, and may reach the heart, but will never subdue it. The heart is addressed by them; but it holds out in an obstinacy of pursuit, which means alone never overcome. Mr. Irving seems at times sensible of the inadequacy of means; but at others, he speaks as if the only reason why they are not always irresistible, is, that they are poor, indiscreet or ill adapted.

Esq. Well, I confess that I felt something of this discrepancy in his work; but you know there are some of the most elegant writers of the day who have advanced a similar idea. The illustrious Erskine has offered this as his

opinion; at least, he conveys the idea.

F. True, he does, and nearly ruined his otherwise beautiful treatise on the evidences of christianity.

Esq. How do you account for this?

F. Perhaps the latter writer mentioned may ascribe his error to the want of investigation of that particular topic. Some men become so great, certain points are deemed too easy of decision to require investigation. They deem themselves capable of deciding almost intuitively; and will by no means descend to the drudgery of studying points of theology.

Besides, he has stepped from his profession, and has meddled with matters not appropriately belonging to him.

Esq. Then none but your Bishops have any right to speak or write upon theology!

F. That is more than I mean to say. But I seldom knew a man of one profession, that had a deep and universal acquaintance with the peculiarities of other professions. It is not irrational to suppose that divines should understand divinity as well as statesmen, lawyers, doctors, or farmers.

Esq. Perhaps then Mr. Irving understands theology, and the manner of treating it, as well as you, the farmer, do.

F. Yes; I have taken great liberty, I confess. But my object

was to excite a few queries in your mind respecting it. I knew you to be young and ardent; and the taste of the day seems to encourage such writings as those which we have been considering. Now for one, I do not believe that wisdom was born with Mr. Irving.—or will die with him. In spite of his declamation, I have yet left a great deal of respect for the clear, pure and appropriate English Language which divines have used in days that I never saw. And I would not exchange it for the careless and far borrowed Scotticisms of the Orator. C. F.

Con. Ob.

INFIDELITY BROUGHT TO THE TEST OF EXPERIMENT.

Mr. Godwin in writing the life of Mary Woolstencraft, meant without doubt, to recommend infidelity to mankind, but happily for them, he has in these memoirs exhibited what may be termed a series of experiments, from which they may learn its tendency, both as to morals and happiness. In the beginning of the work he informs us that Mrs. Woolstencraft "had received few lessons of religion in her youth, and that her religion was almost entirely of her own creating"—that "she expected a future state, but would not allow her ideas of that future state to be modified by the notions of judgment and retribution.

Now let us hear the progress which she did for half an hour of this self-created religion. It led her, first, to remissness in attending public worship; and, at length, to discontinue it entirely. Mr. Godwin indeed thinks "it may be admitted as a maxim, that no person, of a well furnished mind, that has shaken off the implicit subjection of youth, and is not the zealous partizan of a sect, can bring himself to conform to the public and regular routine of sermons and prayers.

Her religion was as chaste as it was devout. It allowed her to live as a wife with Mr. Inlay, without being married to him, and afterwards on the same terms with Mr. Godwin, to whom she was at length married, only to prevent her complete exclusion from decent society.

Her attachment to Inlay seems to have been violent. His neglect of her gave her most poignant distress. The religion of *her own* creating totally unlike that which God teaches, affording no resource for her wretched mind, she twice in the course of five months, resolved on suicide. One attempt to destroy herself is thus related by Godwin; "she took a boat, and rowed to Putney. It was night when she arrived at Putney, and by that time it had begun to rain with great violence. The rain suggested to her the idea of walking up and down the bridge till her clothes were thoroughly drenched and heavy with the wet

without meeting a human being. She then leaped from the top of the bridge, but still seemed to find a difficulty in sinking which she endeavoured to counteract by pressing her clothes closely around her." She, however, was discovered, and taken out of the water. "After having been for a considerable time insensible," continues her biographer, "She was recovered by the exertion of those by whom the body was found."

But let us hasten to the conclusion. She died in childbed. In the detail of this awful scene, we have the following affecting passage: "Her religion as I have already shown, was not calculated to be the torment of a sick bed; and in fact, during her whole illness, not one word of a religious cast fell from her lips." In other words she died like an atheist. The paradoxical cast of her mind was visible in other things as well as in the affairs of religion. She ridiculed the fashion of the English women in keeping their chamber for a month, and for herself proposed "coming down to dinner on the day immediately following her being brought to bed;" but she was too ill to execute her design. The hour was at hand, the awful hour that was to put a period to all her visionary ideas, and all her opportunities of preparing for another world; yet she would still utter her philosophical reveries. Describing

what she had suffered, she told Godwin, "that she should have died the preceding night but that *she was determined* not to leave him." Such is the good sense, such the piety and comforts of the new philosophy. These are the enlighteners of mankind. These are the people who undertake to cure us of our prejudice?

Chris. Ob. VIATOR.

PART II.

THOUGHTS ON THE SABBATH DURING THE JEWISH DISPENSATION.

The sanctification of the seventh day, which was appointed in the time of man's primeval innocence must have continued to be an institution of constant obligation through the succeeding ages, which intervened between the fall of man and the publication of the moral law at Mount Sinai. Since we find no repeal of the original command in the books of Moses. When a summary of the moral law was promulgated to the Israelites, at the Holy Mount and inscribed by the finger of God on tables of stone, we find this original command of a Sabbath, bearing a conspicuous part in the sacred code. The fourth commandment explains and enforces this first institution of God to man. *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*; or, as it is expressed by Moses when recapitulating the commands in the book of Deuter-

onomy. *Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it.* Deut. 5, 12.

Let us then enquire, what are the duties of the day and what the limitations of those duties, as they are to be found in Scripture during the Jewish dispensation.

The fourth commandment shews that we are to abstain from our ordinary worldly calling and employments, which it is our duty to pursue on the other six days with diligence. "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work." Exodus, 20, 9 10.

We are commanded also to use our endeavours that this day be sanctified by all over whom we have authority or influence.—"Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.

We are not, therefore, to permit the works of our ordinary worldly occupations to be carried on by others on our behalf; but we ought to put the same restraint upon those who are under our control which our duty requires us to put upon ourselves.

The Supreme Legislator has given us, by the prophet Isaiah, a still more ample account of the duties implied in the sanctification of the Sabbath. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my

holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, &c. This passage of scripture deserves to be studied with peculiar attention, as it not only describes the duties of the day, but also the temper of mind with which they are to be performed. The Prophet arranges the command under three heads. The first is, that we are not to do our own ways, which relates chiefly, I apprehend, to our worldly business, as is largely set forth in the fourth commandment. The second, that we are not to find our own pleasure on the Sabbath. It is not to be a day of merriment, of sports, of pastimes, or of mere amusement. All those ways of spending the Sabbath, which are contrived for the purpose of sensual pleasure are to be avoided, though the temperate refreshment of the body is not forbidden. It is to be a day of rest from bodily labour ; but not a season of mere animal recreation. It is unnecessary and indeed impossible, to enumerate the various species of pleasure which are forbidden on this day ; but as every one knows what is meant by a day of sensual pleasure, so every one may know what is forbidden under this head.

Thirdly, we are forbidden to speak our own words. The conversation ought to be suited to the sacred offices of the day. For as we are prohibited from pursuing our ordinary labours on the Sabbath, so are we also prohibited from making them the subject of our discourse, we cease from our own words, when we confine our conversation to subjects of a religious or moral nature, when we employ our time in instructing our dependents, our children and servants, or in edifying conversation with our equals. Though these three injunctions are expressed in the negative form ; yet (according to a well known rule of interpreting scripture, a rule derived from the scriptures themselves) we must understand them as enjoining the opposite conduct. This beautiful passage of the Prophet teaches us also what ought to be the temper of our minds in these holy exercises.—Far from being weary of the spiritual employment on the Sabbath, we ought to account them our pleasures, and call *the Sabbath a delight*, as well as *holy of the Lord*. This day we are to esteem *honourable* above all others. We are thus peculiarly to *honour Him*, whose bounty created us, whose long suffering has preserved us, and whose unsearchable goodness has provided a way for our eternal redemption. Thus in the nature of the duty of sanctifying the sabbath pointed out with the utmost clearness. A limitation, however, is sometimes put, by the infirmi-

ties of our fallen nature, to some of the exercises which ought, when we are unrestrained to occupy us on this sacred day. Sickness may confine us to our beds, when we should otherwise be engaged in public worship; and, in such occasional interruptions, we may require the attention and assistance of others.

The Lord, by declaring that he prefers mercy to sacrifice, has pointed out our duty on these occasions. Whatever the necessities of our nature, as the relief of hunger, or aid in sickness, may require, must be considered as consistent with the sanctification of the Sabbath. Our Savior, by his precepts, and example, has completely illustrated this part of the subject.

Here it is proper to observe, that God sent forth his Son *made under the law*. Christ lived and died under the Jewish dispensation. By his expositions of the moral law he pointed out its real nature and extent, but made no alterations in it. When he declared that acts of necessity and charity were suitable to the Sabbath he introduced no new doctrine but appealed to the Jews themselves respecting the truth of what he taught. "Jesus spake unto the lawyers and pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? And they held their peace. Luke, 14 3.

The question, undoubtedly was of this import: Is it agreeable to

the law of God as delivered by Moses? Is it consistent with the fourth commandment and with the illustration of that commandment by the holy prophets? The silence of the Jewish rulers was a tacit acknowledgement, that such acts of mercy were consistent with the due observance of the sabbath. If the ordinary employment of any person consists in these acts which the proper duties of the Sabbath require, or which are allowed on that day they certainly cannot be considered as infringements of the fourth commandment. The blessed Jesus appealed to the law of Moses on this head.—

"Have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath day, the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless?"—

Matt. 12. 5. Our Savior also taught that it is consonant to the law of God to take a due care even of the brute creation on the Sabbath, much more of our fellow creatures; and on this ground he reprov'd the indignant ruler of the synagogue, who wished to represent our Savior's healing of the diseased as a work forbidden on the Sabbath day. "Thou hypocrite, doth each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him to watering?" And again, to the lawyers and pharisees, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" And they could

not answer him again to these things. Luke 13, 15. 14, 3. These passages scripture clearly prove, that our Lord was not introducing any relaxation of the Sabbath, suited to the genius of the Gospel dispensation; but that he was speaking the language of the law as delivered to the Jews, and shewing, that acts of necessity, of mercy, and compassion, were duties suited to the strictest observance of the Sabbath. If this had not been the case our Savior could not have charged the ruler with hypocrisy, nor would his appeal to the law of Moses have silenced them who wished to accuse him of breaking that law. It has been thought by some, that our Savior exceeded the bounds of the Jewish law, when he directed the man whom he had healed at the pool of Bethesda, "to take up his bed and walk." John, 5. 8. because God had commanded the people, by the prophet Jeremiah "to bear no burden on the Sabbath day." Ch. 17. 21. Those who entertain such a thought, should consider that our Lord perfectly understood the law, and if this was a breach of it, he was directing the poor man to commit a heinous offence against the state; for this as well as several others of the ten commandments, was incorporated into the civil laws of the Jews. "Ye shall keep the Sabbath, for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death." Exod. 31. 14,

But an attentive consideration of the passages, prohibiting the bearing of burdens on the Sabbath, will shew that they relate to such burdens as were borne in the carrying on of trade or ordinary labors. "If ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of the city, on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein." Jer. 17. 24.— So likewise in the book of Nehemiah. "In those days I saw in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine grapes and figs and all manner of burdens which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. Neh. 13. 15." The cripple, when our Savior had healed at the pool of Bethesda, was friendless as well as poor; and probably had nothing but his portable bed or mattress, whereon to rest his weary limbs: the Lord Jesus, therefore directed him to take care of this necessary piece of furniture, when he had strengthened the body of this indigent creature and enabled him to return to his own house.

Another passage of the Old Testament may be thought to express a degree of strictness in the observance of the Sabbath which was peculiar to the Jewish dispensation. "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitation on the Sabbath day. Exod. 35. 3.— But this, compared with its context, seems to relate only to fires

made for the purposes of labour. The whole passage runs thus; "Six days shalt work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire &c."

We may rest assured that he who prefers mercy to sacrifice, would not forbid the use of fire for the purpose of warmth in any country where the inhabitants might be compelled to say, "Who is able to abide his frosts?" Nor is it probable, that he who vindicated the conduct of his disciples when they had plucked the ears of corn as they walked through the fields, for the purpose of satisfying their hunger would forbid the use of fire for the necessary preparations of their food.

We may conclude, therefore, that the kindling of a fire, for the refreshment of the body, was not contrary to the Jewish law.

On the whole, I see nothing in the duties of the Sabbath, as subsisting under the Jewish dispensation, but a most spiritual and rational service, suitable, indeed, to the period of man's innocence, yet accommodated to the necessities which sin has introduced into the world. The sanctions of the Sabbath were undoubtedly increased, as the breach of it was, by that law, made a capital offence. But this was not peculiar to the fourth commandment, and was a circumstance belonging to the pol-

icy rather than to the religion of the Jews.

I cannot conceive a more delightful exercise to a heavenly minded person, than that of spending the day in the manner described by the prophet Isaiah. If the Jews, instead of confining their attention to these spiritual services prepared a number of unnecessary restraints, we must not form our Judgment of the real duties of the Sabbath from their conduct. We know that the farther they deviated from the pure word of God in other instances, the more careful they were to make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments; nor were they ever more strict in tything mint, anise, and cummin, than when they neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and the law of God. W. H.

Ch. Obs.

POSITIVE DIVINE EFFICIENCY.

To the Editors of the Christian Magazine.

Gentlemen,

A correspondent in your April number has answered some objections to the doctrine, that God exerts a *positive agency* in the hearts of sinners, or an agency of the same kind and degree that is exerted in the hearts of christians.

I say this is the doctrine he defends, because he calls it "*positive*

agency" and reasons throughout his 2d and 3d heads on the supposition that it is in kind and degree the *same* agency which is exercised over saints ; and because if he does not mean this, he is contending with a shadow for none who "acknowledge that the saint acts under a positive Divine Agency" deny that in some sense the Divine agency is concerned with every event in the Universe.

Neither of your correspondent's objections, except the first, did I ever hear made by any who believe in a positive agency in the case of saints ; yet I am ready to admit, that he has fully answered them, and if he, or some other one, will as fully answer those of which I have heard, I shall be gratified.

Hoping that this may be done, or at least that some of your able correspondents will throw some light on a subject which is often needlessly darkened by the manner in which it is treated, & which is connected with the first principles of our religion, I shall state freely the difficulties to which I allude.

I. The doctrine is contrary to the experience of christians.

Christians feel, and frequently say, that if left to themselves, in their unrenewed state, they should have gone on in sin ; and if left to themselves (i.e. without any different kind or degree of Divine influence than they had before conversion, they should, after regeneration, fall away and perish.

The general Divine agency which upholds the moral faculties of the christian, is not enough ; he needs a superadded positive or special agency to preserve him :—such an agency that he feels bound to ascribe his preservation to God and not to himself, though his actions were perfectly free.

Now what man ever felt the need of such an agency to preserve him in a course of transgression, or indeed of any other Divine influence than that which preserves him a moral agent in the midst of temptation ? The objection implies that the agency of God in the case of sinners as found by experience to be different, to be less direct & positive than that which is exercised in saints.

II. It is inconsistent with the representations of Scripture.—These representations accord exactly with the experience of true christians. from the manifest reason that they are delineations of those emotions which true christians feel.

They represent that we are naturally prone to evil exclusively and continually, that we are led captive by Satan at his will ; that we are drawn away by our own lusts, and not tempted of God, when we commit iniquity ; that when God takes away the restraints which his influence imposes upon sinners, withdraws his spirit from them and leaves them to their own ways, they rush on to hopeless ruin.

On the other hand, they represent saints as kept by the power of God; God hath made them to differ from others; as to their good deeds, it is not they who do them, but Christ who dwelleth in them; the Lord inclines their hearts to his statutes and keeps their feet in his way.

The agency of God is exerted and is *efficient* in both cases, (i. e. accomplishes all which God designs) but in one case it is privative or indirect and general, in the other, it is positive, direct and special. In one case, it merely preserves the ordinary laws of mind and does not prevent their natural effect, in the other, it counteracts the influence of these laws or creates new ones. Just as the agency of God is as *real* and *efficient* in causing a stone to fall to the ground when unsupported, as in causing it to fly off unpropelled, whilst there is yet a manifest difference in the agency exerted in the two cases.

The Scriptures also represent the human mind as the scene of a controversy between God and the adversary of souls. God invites, urges, threatens sinners in order to lead them to holiness. Satan allures, flatters, deceives, in order to keep them in sin. Now if the agency of God is equally direct and positive on both sides of this controversy, there would seem to be an incongruity in the representation.

Again; the scriptures speak of the actions of good men as if the credit of these actions were to be ascribed to the Divine agency which prompted them, in some respects as the credit of the reformation of a voluptuous youth is ascribed to the kind friend whose persuasion induced him to reform, or the guilt of his vicious course to the man whose counsels and influence led him astray. Now if the agency of God is the same in the hearts of sinners, as of saints why does it not follow that the actions of the wicked are to be ascribed to God in the same sense as the holy actions of the righteous.

III. The doctrine is not in the Bible.

If this objection can be fairly set aside I freely acknowledge that the doctrine must be received, whatever difficulties may attend it. The text to which your correspondent alludes Ex. 9. 12. "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh and several others which he might have named, prove, (what indeed nobody doubts) the existence of some divine agency in the actions of wicked men; but do they prove that this agency is positive or direct; and that it is the same as in the actions of holy men? If they do not, they leave the objection unaffected; if they *do* prove this, the objection will be answered by showing *how* they prove it. With a few remarks upon your

correspondents principles of interpretation I shall close.

He says he "knows of no principles of logic or interpretation which allow of such license" as ascribing to *God* what *man* does. I profess no skill in the "rules of logic or interpretation" with which your correspondent seems familiar, but I have been accustomed to regard the principles which he thinks so inadmissible, viz. that it is proper to ascribe to *God* in one sense, what is done by *man* in another sense as of fundamental and indispensable importance in the explanation of the scriptures.—Nor do I see how your correspondent can without it dispose of the very text he adduced, viz. "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh," for the same chapter repeatedly assures us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. I know of no way to avoid this difficulty, but by adopting the principle in question and saying "God hardened Pharaoh's heart by employing another" (i. e. Pharaoh himself) "to do it."

Again; it is said II. Saml. 24. 1. "The Lord moved David to number Israel and I. Chron. 21. 1. that Satan moved him to the same thing; yet II. Saml. 24. 10, 17 and I. Chron. 21. 8, 17 the transaction is spoken of as if David's agony was alone concerned in numbering the people. Will your correspondent inform me by what "principles of interpretation" he reconciles these without admitting that the Lord

moved David, by employing satan to move him?

Indeed the whole number of texts in which the actions of men are ascribed to God, seem incapable of explanation without admitting that God is said to do, what in his providence he employs others to do.* The truth is we cannot tell from the terms employed, whether the Divine agency in particular cases, is the same or different, direct or indirect, for the manifest reason that agencies are spoken of in the same terms which are in other parts of the scriptures determined to be different. The objections mentioned go to show that this is the case in the agency exercised in the hearts of sinners and of saints and it may be well for your correspondent to answer the *real* objections of those who differ from him before he very confidently concludes their opinion to be false. If the reasonings on the rules of interpretation, to which he objects, are invalid, it will tend much to the conviction of those who adopt them to have this invalidity pointed out.

XANTHUS.

*See an admirable illustration of this principle in a Sermon of the Rev. Dr. Emmons relative to Pharaoh.

Friendship.—A false friend is like the shadow of a dial, it appears in clear weather, but vanishes on the approach of a cloud.

Scandal.—The way in which some good sort of people are betrayed into scandal is not by forging a false story, but by telling what they do not know to be true. There is not so much lying in the world as want of solicitude about truth. Another tosses the fire-brand to us and we toss it along. Let such people remember a sentence from Barrow. "There is no great difference between the great Devil that framed scandalous reports and the little imps that run about and disperse them. The reader must recollect the etymology of the Greek word, devil.

Ch. Spec.

INTELLIGENCE.

The Pope has lately founded a philological college at Rome, on the same footing as the ancient Sorbonne in France, which will be charged with the examination of all literary works before they are printed. His Holiness has also considerably augmented the number of theological colleges.

Some years since, the Syrian Archbishop, Giarve, visited Rome, Paris, and London, to obtain money, as he then professed, in order to print the Scriptures on Mount Lebanon. Money and a press were accordingly given him; but he has never printed the Scriptures, and being now elected Syrian Patriarch, he opposes their circulation by the missionaries.

The Rev. Lewis Way purchased a Church at Paris, at an ex-

pense, to himself, of about \$45,000, and officiated in it as long as as his health would permit. There are commonly about 20,000 English People at Paris.—An American Church is also established there. There are 2 or 3 millions of Protestants in France.

The whole number of missionaries now actually employed by the British Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign parts, in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward's Island, Cape Breton, New-Brunswick, and Newfoundland, together with the Canadas and Bermudas, is one hundred and three; besides whom, more than a hundred schoolmasters are partially supported from its funds.

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